AEGEAN HISTORY 1500—1200 B.C.[1]

BY

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I must begin with a personal explanation. I am no historian, not even an archaeologist ; my particular field of study is the Greek language. What then am I doing talking about history? To explain this, I must define in what sense it is possible to talk meaningfully about the history of the Aegean area in the three centuries which represent the zenith of the Mycenaean civilisation. History in the strict sense of the examination of written documents and the recreation from them of an account of past ages is, obviously, not possible without documents to work from. Yet for the period I am going to discuss the only contemporary documents are a relatively small number of clay tablets, which represent only a part of the day-to-day business transactions of two palaces and of some outlying offices at two other places. This is unpromising material, and I shall not make a great deal of use of it.

But someone will say : even if contemporary documents are absent or uninformative, we do not lack later accounts of the great events of the age : the exploits of Herakles, the voyage of exploration of the Argonauts, the grim story of the dynasty of Thebes, the rape of Helen and the resulting siege and destruction of Troy, the dispersal of the returning army, and much more. All these stories are amply attested in the poetry of classical Greece ; some of the stories are told, others are assumed as the background of new details invented by tragedians. Everyone by the

[1] This is a slightly revised version of a lecture delivered at the Institute of Historical Studies in Bucharest on 26th June 1968. I have not tried to quote my sources extensively, partly because much of the archaeological information is derived from conversations with archaeologists rather than published work. I should like to thank all those, too numerous to name, who have discussed these problems with me and beg their indulgence if I have misunderstood their views. I need hardly emphasise that this is a tentative sketch, not a definitive picture, and I am sure it will need correction in the light of new research.

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fifth century knew at least the outline of the legends, and assumed that they were the true history of their race.

No one nowadays, I hope, believes that a Greek king called Agamemnon returned from a ten years' siege of Troy and was murdered in his bath by his unfaithful wife. Yet we have not shaken off the habit of regarding Homer as an historian and the Attic tragedians as heirs of an unrecorded historical tradition. We still visit the site of Troy and contemplate with awe the great walls labelled Troy VI, and think of the body of Hector being dragged around them behind Achilles' chariot. I must be brutal : Homer is a poet, not an historian, and if we try to recreate the history of Mycenaean Greece by following him we shall end in perplexity and contradiction.

For instance, there is one point in which the contemporary documents, the Linear B tablets from the Mycenaean palace of Pylos, allow us to check Homer's information. He tells us a good deal about the realm of Nestor; he knows that his capital was called Pylos, but the author of the Odyssey is obviously ignorant of the name of its port, and did not appreciate its distance from the sea. In the Iliad we have a list of the principal towns of the kingdom; in the tablets we have equally such a list of 16 towns, other than Pylos. Only one name on the tablets reappears in Homer; and that is *Helos*, 'the Marsh', the name of a common geographical feature, and there is nothing to suggest that the name on the two lists refers to the same site. Even if we add the many other place names recorded on the Pylos tablets, there is still only one which seems to be the same as a town given by Homer : the Homeric *Kyparisseeis* is very likely the same as the *Kyparissos* of the tablets, and indeed the old name for the town has been revived in the form of Kyparissia. It is not that Homer gives no names; they are the wrong ones — at least for the date of 1200 B.C. and thus almost certainly for the preceding period. It does not even seem likely that Homer has taken the names current in his own day, five centuries later, for the Alexandrian scholars had great difficulty in identifying the towns he mentions, and seem in many cases to have been guessing. Thus, I fear, the conclusion is inescapable that Homer knows nothing of the political geography of Messenia in the Mycenaean Age except the name of the capital; the tablets confirm that the Palace *was* known as Pylos. And in many other details too Homer can now be proved inaccurate. So if our earliest classical authority is unreliable, what confidence can be placed in the reporting of later authors?

I believe therefore that we must at the outset discard all that we are told about their remote ancestors by the Greeks themselves; perhaps when we have reconstructed the history from other sources we shall be able to return to the legends and see how they may have arisen. But to begin our reconstruction we must look elsewhere.

Now our principal tool must be archaeology. As I said, I am no archaeologist, and I quote only the facts established by the collective

efforts of archaeologists over the last century — or a little less, for it is not yet 100 years since Schliemann first unearthed the cities of the Aegean Bronze Age. But we can supplement and interpret the mute testimony of tombs and palaces by reference to linguistics. All too often the interpretation has been left to the archaeologist; but now the linguist too has something to contribute to the picture, and this is my justification for attempting my own synthesis of these disparate sources.

We must not forget that archaeology deals only with things — the things that people make, their houses and tombs, their pots, their weapons, their jewellery, even the things people are, their skeletons. We may be able to calculate the average height of Mycenaean men; but no archaeologist can tell us how or what he spoke. This is something only the linguist can do. So long as the documents were unknown or undeciphered we could not even speak of Mycenaean Greeks; the experts coined the term 'Pre-Hellenic' to describe this period, and they still cling to this outmoded label. It is not of course quite fair to the archaeologists to say that they cannot advance beyond material facts; for inferences can be drawn from these facts which have wider implications. The number of settlements discovered is some indication of the density of population; the existence of palaces implies a monarchical system of government; the diffusion of pottery outside Greece demonstrates the extent of international trade. But another limitation is perhaps more important: the archaeological negative has been shown time and time again to be dangerous. Despite the testimony of Homer, the archaeologists down to a few years ago insisted that the Mycenaeans had no bronze body-armour; in 1960 the Swedish archaeologists opened a tomb at Dendrá in the Argolid which contained a complete suit of such armour. Thus we must rely much more on positive than negative evidence.

Linguistics is limited by the availability of texts; it can offer no direct clues to the identity of an illiterate people. But it does often offer a means of deducing earlier facts. We cannot only observe the linguistic facts presented by documents; we can often deduce from them the linguistic history which produced them. Let me demonstrate two ways in which this is possible.

Where we have a number of dialects, their study can lead to conclusions about the conditions which led to the division of the language into dialects. We have such a situation in Greece during the classical period, the sixth to fourth centuries B.C., when every small state spoke and wrote its own local type of Greek. By grouping these dialects we can discover how the ancestors of these people were distributed. For instance, even without any later legends we could deduce purely from linguistic facts that the peoples of the Peloponnese, Crete and the Dodecanese were closely related, and from the way they surrounded a different dialect in Arcadia, which is closely related to that of Cyprus, we could deduce that the

Peloponnesians had displaced speakers of an earlier Greek dialect, leaving only these two distant relics. Such a deduction had in fact been made before the decipherment of Linear B proved that in the Mycenaean period all of southern Greece and Crete had a very uniform Greek dialect, which has its closest classical relatives in Arcadia and Cyprus.

Secondly, it is possible to infer linguistic history from place names. These are rarely all of a single origin. My own country has names which reflect the Celtic inhabitants who opposed Julius Caesar, the Romans who made Britain a province for three centuries, the Anglo-Saxons who then invaded the island from across the North Sea, the Vikings who raided it and settled there, and finally the Normans whose invasion in 1066 led to the emergence of modern English from Anglo-Saxon. In the Balkans you can equally trace from place names the history of your land through all its vicissitudes since the Roman occupation of the province of Dacia.

So too in Greece; but we need not start with the present map of Greece, with all its Slavonic, Albanian, Vlach and Turkish names. We can take out the map of classical Greece and observe that here too very few of the names are pure Greek. Where we do find Greek names, we most often have a settlement of historic date: *Naupaktos*, *Megalopolis*, *Amphipolis*, *Thermopylae*. But the old cities and mountains and islands have meaningless names: *Athēnai*, *Mykēnai*, *Messānā*, *Korinthos*, *Zakynthos*; *Halikarnassos*, *Parnassos*, *Lykabēttos*; and hundreds more. Even when a name resembles a Greek word we may suspect deformation of a non-Greek name by popular etymology: *Rhodos* probably has nothing to do with *rhódon* 'the rose', nor *Sparta* with *spartós* 'sown'.

It has too often been assumed that all these pre-Greek names belong to a single language spoken all over the Aegean area when the Greeks arrived. The analogy of place-names in other countries would suggest that this is unlikely to be true; admittedly place names may reflect the presence of only two populations, as in New Zealand, where they are a mixture of Maori and English names. But it would be unwise to assume such a simple situation in Greece. In North America it might be tempting to regard all non-European names as belonging to a single pre-Columbian language; in fact we know that there were several linguistic groups among the American Indians.

A first step in the discrimination of the Greek names was taken some years ago by a former pupil of mine, Mr. D. A. Hester [2]. He showed that there was statistical evidence for distinguishing two types of stem among them; and that one of these languages had a strong tendency towards open syllables. Even more remarkable, he demonstrated that even those with the suffix *-ssos* did not form a homogeneous group. What is much more dangerous is the assumption that the suffixes *-ssos* (with a double

[2] 'Pre-Greek place names in Greece and Asia Minor', Revue Hittite et Asianique, 15 (1957), pp. 107–119.

s) and *-sos* (with a single *s* at the beginning) were identical. It is true that ancient documents betray some fluctuation in the spelling of certain names : the principal town of Crete is sometimes Κνωσός, sometimes Κνωσσός, but the former is shown to be correct by the Argive form of the adjective, Κνōhίαν [3], where single -σ- has passed to *-h-*, a change -σσ- would not undergo.

Studies of the place names on the Pylos and Knossos tablets equally suggest differences in the onomastic of Crete and the mainland. It is true that one Cretan town, *Amnisos*, is apparently mentioned on the Pylos tablets ; but it is more likely to be a town of the same name on the mainland, than a reference to Crete. But there are types of name such as those in *-ewa* or *-ānes*, which are frequent at Pylos but unknown in Crete. I believe that further examination of this subject will prove that, despite some similarities, the place names of Crete show considerable divergences from those of the mainland. The common features may belong to the neolithic period rather than the Minoan ; but the tendency of names to be carried by migrating peoples is so evident that it requires little to explain the coincidences.

Attempts have been made, notably by L. R. Palmer [4], to identify some of the place names as Luvian, that is to say, the language of South-Western Anatolia in the Bronze Age. For various technical reasons I find the theory of Luvian borrowings unattractive ; and even if the theory contains some truth, it seems highly unlikely that Palmer can be right in ascribing a Luvian origin to the invaders who spread over Greece at the end of the Early Helladic period, round the 20th century B.C. I think there is little reason to doubt that these people were — not the Greeks, but an Indo-European-speaking people who, after mixing with the earlier inhabitants and accepting many of their words into their language, gave birth to the distinctive branch of Indo-European known as Greek [5].

We have also some vague and scanty information about Greece in the Mycenaean age from contemporary Egyptian and Hittite records. The Hittites knew of a power which operated on the Asiatic coast of the Aegean called *Aḫḫijawā*, which is almost certainly to be identified with Ἀχαιϝία, the land of the Ἀχαιοί, Homer's name for the Greeks. But it is impossible to locate it precisely ; some have thought it refers to Rhodes, others to the Greek mainland ; and the presence of the same name as the destination of a consignment of sheep and goats on a tablet from Knossos [6] does nothing to resolve the obscurity.

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[3] Schwyzer, Dial. 84. The English form with *-ss-* is now too well established to bear a change.

[4] *Mycenaeans and Minoans*, 2nd ed., London, 1965, esp. pp. 327—353.

[5] See further my chapter 'The Prehistory of the Greek Language' in *Cambridge Ancient History*, 2nd ed. Vol. II. Chapter 39.

[6] KN C 914. Palmer's objection (*Interpretation*, p. 65), that parallels indicate that *a-ka-wi-ja-de* is the name of the herdsman, is based upon the assumption that this tablet forms part

The Egyptians had commerce with a land called Keftiu, which appears to be their name for Crete; but there is some evidence that during the 15th century B.C. it declined in importance, and its place seems to be taken by "the Islands of the Great Green", which is thought to refer to Greece. It would be unwise to base much on such vague references; but as we shall see the chronology fits well with facts we shall establish from other sources.

Ishall now attempt to link together these scattered pieces of evidence in a synthesis designed to serve as an historical outline of the period between 1500 and 1200 B.C. A great deal of theorising will be needed to fill the gaps; but even if some details in the picture I am going to present are wrong, I hope that the overall impression may serve as a useful framework subject to further correction.

By 1500 southern Greece was already the home of a flourishing civilisation; the shaft graves at Mycenae already held the bodies of kings and queens, princes and princesses, buried with their gold masks, their jewels or their weapons. Settlements were many, and the country must already have supported a considerable population. This civilisation extended north of the Isthmus to Boeotia and Attica; and some sites are known as far north as Thessaly, but its full northward extent is uncertain. The north-west, Epirus and the modern Albania, is largely an archaeological blank. Since there is a continuous line of development at Pylos and Mycenae from this time to the date of the Linear B tablets in the 13th century, it is probably safe to infer that the language was Greek; and since this language was already showing innovations which are not shared by the Doric dialects of later times, it follows that the ancestors of the Dorians were at this date not located in the Peloponnese. At the same time it is impossible to account for the Greekness of the Doric dialects as due entirely to influence by other dialects. Thus the Dorians must have parted company with the other Greeks at no very remote date. It is a reasonable guess to locate them in the unexplored north-west.

If civilisation was flourishing in Greece, in Crete it was even more advanced. Palaces had existed for centuries at Knossos, Phaistos, Mallia and Zakro; and civilised life was established all over the central and eastern parts of the island. One of the chief indications of the level of civilisation is the existence of writing; the Minoan script had evolved to a fairly standardised form, and by 1500 was in use at as many as six sites all over the island, again excepting the far west. Writing was used on clay tablets to keep records, as in Mycenaean Greece, though the entries are much more abbreviated. But there is a clear difference in the extension

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of the great archive of sheep tablets. In fact the presence of goats as well as sheep, its find-spot and its hand separate it clearly from these, and it belongs to a set made up of 908, 913, 915, 922, 941, 5765, 7064, 8225, 8347, 8578, and 8584 (?). The only constant feature visible here is the presence of *pa-ro* and a man's name; thus it offers no good evidence for identifying *a-ka-wi-ja-de* and we may fall back on the obvious interpretation */Akhaiwiān-de/*.

of writing to dedicatory inscriptions on movable objects. No extensive inscriptions have been found on buildings; single signs are frequent, but are presumably only mason's marks. None the less, there is reason to think that literacy was less restricted than in Greece.

It was assumed by Evans that the palace he unearthed at Knossos was the capital of the whole island, and the successive discoveries of other major, but smaller, sites elsewhere in the island did not cause him to modify his view. Dr. S. Alexiou in his recent book on Minoan Civilisation [7] follows Evans in this, pointing out that the three major palaces (Zakro was found too late for inclusion) were all begun about the same time and use the same kind of plan and method of construction. With all due respect to such an eminent archaeologist, it does not seem to me to follow that because official buildings in different towns of the same date use the same style, this indicates direction by a central authority. All we need imagine is that the rulers of Phaistos and Mallia, impressed by the new buildings at Knossos, asked for the services of the same architect.

It seems here to be overlooked that the mere existence of buildings which demand the title of palaces implies the existence of local rulers. I fear the baneful influence of Homer here; just because he ascribes two kings to the Argolid, Tiryns and Mycenae are looked upon as the capitals of separate states; Homer ascribes most of Crete to Idomeneus, with his capital at Knossos, and this has coloured the archaeologists' appraisal of the evidence. Of course, not every palace need have been independent; Phaistos and Hagia Triada, less than 5 km. apart, can hardly have belonged to independent states. But it is hard to see any reason why the four major palaces should have been under the control of one king. Crete is a large island and communications are difficult; a division into separate states (as in classical times) seems perfectly logical.

What is more, the tablets in Linear A offer a positive reason for rejecting Evans' Knossocentric theory. Archives are kept only in administrative centres; thus tablets found at Hagia Triada and Phaistos, Tylissos, Knossos, Mallia, Palaikastro and Zakro imply the existence of at least six administrative centres. Some are doubtless subordinate centres, dealing only with local affairs; but the division of responsibility in Minoan times contrasts very strikingly with the total absence of archives outside Knossos in the Late Minoan II period, when the script was Linear B. We know that Knossos then was administering virtually the whole island, and the detailed records of flocks, wool and cloth at Phaistos were kept, not locally, but in Knossos. Evans' theory fits this period well; but earlier all the evidence points to a group of largely independent kingdoms led by, and perhaps federated with, Knossos but managing their own local affairs. No one deduces from the superior size and wealth of Mycenae that its ruler was king of all Greece, though he must have been pre-

[7] Μινωϊκὸς πολιτισμός, Herakleion, 1965.

eminent; perhaps the ruler of Knossos enjoyed a similar position in Minoan Crete.

It has long been known that at a date early in the 15th century B.C. the volcanic island of Thera (Santorin) exploded. As long ago as 1939 Professor S. Marinatos [8] of the University of Athens suggested that this was the cause of the collapse of Minoan Crete. His views were received with merited scepticism. But the situation has recently been transformed by the researches of two American geologists, Drs. Ninkovitch and Heezen [9], who have been able to calculate the scale of this explosion. It now appears that it was at least four times as great as the only comparable event in recorded history, the eruption of Krakatau in Indonesia in 1883 — a cataclysm which killed thousands of people, caused tidal waves in Hawaii, 8000 km. away, and discharged a cloud of dust into the atmosphere which travelled three times round the world producing glorious sunsets. In these days of atomic bombs we have grown accustomed to the frightful havoc man can produce; but nature has not yet been surpassed.

Imagine then an event far more powerful than the largest nuclear device yet imagined unleashed on the southern edge of the Cyclades, only 120 km. from the north coast of Crete. The first the Cretans would have known would have been an appalling noise — deafening thunder from a clear sky. (The explosion of Krakatau was heard in Australia). At the same time violent earth tremors may have been felt. The natural reaction would have been to appease the gods, and at Zakro, the only palace never to be re-occupied, there is evidence that this is precisely what they did. A precious alabaster vase was found broken into four pieces, and each piece was at one of the four corners of the building; this must surely have been an expiatory rite designed to avert disaster.

The next stage followed about half-an-hour later. An immense tidal-wave (tsunami), calculated to be more than 30 m. high, bore down on the north coast of Crete. Every harbour and coastal town less than 30 m. above sea-level must have been totally destroyed, along with all shipping. At one stroke countless lives must have been lost, and the means of escaping the disaster taken from those lucky enough to be on higher ground inland. Far worse was to follow. The geologists made soundings of the sea-floor surrounding Thera, and from these they were able to determine the direction of the wind. The deposit of ash was thinnest to the north-west; thus the wind from that direction will have carried the material ejected by the explosion south-eastwards, towards eastern Crete and the Dodecannese. The Cretans will have seen the northern sky grow dark, and a great cloud spread over their island; and from the cloud a rain of ash and sulphurous fumes. At Knossos the excavators

[8] 'The volcanic destruction of Minoan Crete' Antiquity 13 (1939), pp. 425—439.
[9] Submarine Geology, *The Colston Papers*, 1965, pp. 413—452.

found traces of destruction at this period, which they ascribed — quite likely correctly — to an earthquake. The explosion may well have caused seismic disturbances over a wide area.

It is now thought that hot ash was deposited over most of central and eastern Crete to a depth of at least 10 cm., and this would have been enough to destroy all vegetation by poisoning the soil. In a few days the island would have been turned into a desert. Whether the fumes would have been poisonous to life at such a distance is less clear; but it is certain that food supplies would have soon run out. The Minoan civilisation comes to an abrupt end.

It is at this period that the men of Keftiu disappear from the Egyptian monuments. Simultaneously, Minoan settlements in Cythera, Keos and Rhodes come to an end, and are in some cases replaced with Mycenaean Greek ones. Whether the whole of the Minoan collapse can be attributed to volcanic action or not, it can hardly have been anything but the major cause. No doubt other states took advantage of the catastrophe and Minoan power never revived.

It is not unlikely that some groups of Minoans took refuge in Greece, which had been protected from the ash by the direction of the wind. We know that metal-work in Crete had been practised by religious guilds of bronzesmiths working in caves which were at once cult-centres and workshops [10]. Two hundred years later there were groups of smiths in the service of Potnia, the Mistress, in the territory of Pylos; and some bronze vessels were apparently described as "of Cretan make", which may mean no more than that they were of Cretan type.

In the course of 25 years or so, rain and wind would have repaired much of the damage done to Crete by the ash, and it would have been natural to repopulate the island. It is precisely at this date that we find a flourishing period at Knossos, Late Minoan II, with apparently nothing to match it at other Cretan sites. To this date, despite efforts to revise the chronology, belong the Linear B tablets which prove that the language of administration was now Greek; they also show that the authorities in Knossos were controlling the details of the economy in distant parts of the island. The place names on the tablets extend from Kydonia in the west to Lato in the East; and some of the unidentified names doubtless lie outside those limits, for there is reason to believe that two of them belong to the sites of Palaikastro and Zakro in the extreme east. Clearly when Crete became a kingdom again the old organisation was gone, and the Greeks controlled the whole island. Its wealth in this period at least was founded upon the production of wool and cloth; a huge population of sheep was managed from Knossos, and the wool-clip was sedulously recorded there. Conditions after the destruction would have favoured sheep-rearing rather than other forms of agriculture at first.

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[10] Sp. Marinatos, Kadmos 1 (1962), pp. 87—94.

The Late Minoan II period lasted only a very short time; around 1375 B.C. the palace of Knossos was burnt down, never to be rebuilt. This destruction cannot be equated with the eruption of Thera because on this occasion the wind was in the south; nor can it possibly belong to the L.M. IIIB period when sites on the mainland were under attack. What caused this destruction I cannot suggest, but it was not a Minoan revolt against Greek domination, for in the succeeding period the other towns in Crete continued to flourish, and there are indications that three of them continued to use Linear B, and there is no revival of Linear A. Two sherds have been found at Khania, the ancient Kydonia, with Linear B inscriptions. They might be imports; but their Cretan origin is confirmed by a strange story. Nearly 30 jars were found at Thebes in Boeotia with Linear B inscriptions, and among these were the names of two Cretan towns known from the Knossos tablets; this might have been a coincidence, but recent study of the clay of these vases has shown that these are likely to have come from Palaikastro and Zakro in Eastern Crete. The inscriptions are undoubtedly in Greek; therefore Greek continued to be spoken in Crete after the fall of Knossos. In fact, it is not impossible that at Knossos itself a new palace was built on another site, and the old building was partially cleared and re-used by people whom Evans called "squatters" – by which we need only understand common people not aristocrats [11].

On the mainland a period of peace and prosperity seems to have lasted down to the end of the 14th century; but the dates one archaeologist gives are often disputed by another and the exact sequence of events is unclear. Around 1300 the site of Thebes was destroyed, apparently twice in close succession. No explanation can be offered, unless we choose to believe the Greek legends of the attack by Adrastus. Around 1250 widespread destruction occurred at Mycenae up to the massive walls of the citadel. It would appear that the need for defences had become apparent early in the 13th century, and Mycenae and Tiryns were heavily fortified. Around the same period a wall was started – whether it was finished or not we do not know – across the Isthmus of Corinth. It is easy to jump to the conclusion that invaders were pressing on Greece from the north; but it is hard to believe that a major invasion can have come by this route – a raid perhaps, but not a major invading force. At least we can say that the 13th century was a period of insecurity, and this culminated around 1200 when all the major sites in Greece were destroyed and abandoned. What happens thereafter lies outside the limits I set myself, but I want to pause for a moment to discuss the extraordinary collapse of the Mycenaean world.

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[11] Since this lecture was delivered a stirrup-jar with a Linear B inscription has been found by the British archaeologists at Knossos. Its date seems to be clearly post-Palatial, but the writing is so crude as to suggest copying by an illiterate painter.

We have seen how a natural catastrophe assisted, even if it did not entirely cause, the collapse of Minoan Crete. It is tempting to look for a similar event to explain the more or less simultaneous disasters which led to the destruction and depopulation of the main centres of Mycenaean power around 1200 B.C. A theory due to the American scholar, Professor Rhys Carpenter [12], has sought to find the explanation in a hypothetical change of climate, which could have produced a period of drought. Unfortunately for the theory, the direct evidence of palaeobotany [13], the study of pollen contained in cores taken from lagoons in western Greece, proves that no such dramatic change occurred at this period. After 1200 there is a drop in the pollens associated with cereal cultivation, and an increase in olives; in other words, the consequences to be expected if depopulation left the fields untilled and allowed the olive groves to go wild.

Every major palace so far excavated was destroyed by fire, and this cannot be due to accident, for no effort was made to repair the damage or to rebuild the palaces; a period of neglect and stagnation supervened, except perhaps for a few sites like Athens, which contrived to weather the storm and hand on — in a much altered form — something of the Mycenaean tradition to Archaic Greece.

It is Pylos which offers us most information, for not only have we the surviving ruin of the burnt palace, but also the clay tablets on which records were being kept up to the last moment. It has been argued that none of our records reflect the state of emergency which must have preceded the disaster; yet it is hard to see how the 'coast-guard' tablets can be a reflection of a normal state of affairs. Some 700 men were disposed to watch the long coast-line, from somewhere in Triphylia [14] round the peninsula and as far as Kalamata in the Messenian Gulf. This force is much too small and too dispersed to offer resistance to an invasion by sea; but it can have served as an early warning system. Clearly the defenders feared an attack from the sea. If so, we can hardly attribute the invasion to the Dorian Greeks, who in historical times controlled this area, for tradition clearly indicates that they advanced south by land.

But there was a body of sea-raiders active in the Eastern Mediterranean at this period. Around 1225 B.C. and again about 1190 Egypt beat off strong attacks from raiders whom the Egyptians called 'The People of the Sea'. Attempts have been made to identify the peoples named as composing this force; it may be that Greeks took part in the assault on Egypt. A similar attack may have caused the fall of Troy around this time; and if the Greeks took part in the expedition, it is

[12] *Discontinuity in Greek Civilization*, Cambridge, 1966.

[13] H. E. Wright, Antiquity 42 : 166 (June 1968), pp. 123—127.

[14] I reject the suggestion that the northern frontier of the kingdom of Pylos lay on or north of the Alpheios, this is a Homeric confusion. I now believe the frontier lay in the area between the Kyparissia and Neda rivers, closely paralleled by the boundary of the modern province of Triphylia.

possible that in later tradition this became magnified into a purely Greek war involving a ten-year siege.

A series of major raids would have quickly ruined the largely undefended towns of Mycenaean Greece; only a few palaces managed to construct walls in time. The wealth to be carried off can be guessed from the inventory of valuable furniture at Pylos, and there would also be a rich haul of slaves to be sold at markets elsewhere. Perhaps we shall in time learn more about these enigmatic raiders, but of their reality there can be no question, nor need we doubt that they could have exhausted a wealthy civilisation such as existed in Mycenaean Greece, and by cutting their trade-routes have quickly reduced the survivors to a subsistence economy. The palaces were burnt, their contents plundered, their inhabitants slaughtered or carried off into slavery. Greece lay prostrate, and in the dim centuries that followed the barely civilised Dorians moved south to occupy the vacant lands, and to reduce the few survivors to serfdom. The golden age of Greece was over; but the seed of the Greek genius was not dead, but dormant, and after a few centuries would rise again to create an even more brilliant civilisation, and, for the first time, a fully articulate one.